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South Korean Freedoms on the Wane

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In the *kesang* (geisha) houses of Seoul, where electronic rock 'n' roll has replaced the gentle rippling of the *kayakum*, politics is discussed in whispers if at all.

Telephones are bugged. The sometimes free-swinging Korean press is cowed. Five different newspapers ran identical editorials the same day. The political opposition is mute. Freedom of speech and assembly has been suspended.

And on this 12th anniversary of the student-led "April Revolution" that toppled the corrupt tyranny of the Syngman Rhee regime, no student demonstrates.

From the Chicago Daily News.

South Korea is in the grip of the tightest political dictatorship in its turbulent history. The man responsible is dour, bantam-sized President Park Chung Hee, whose decade-long rule has given his country unparalleled prosperity and a better life for most of its 32 million people.

Park believes that in times of national emergency the people should be willing to "concede" the freedom they enjoy for "the sake of national security."

Few Koreans would disagree. Where they part company with Park is on whether the country faces a national emergency. But for the present the point is academic. Park says it is—and what Park says goes.

The great clampdown came last December when, after a heady period of freedom during a presidential election campaign, Park declared a "state of national emergency," which gave him sweeping powers over the press, wages, labor unions and universities—the whole spectrum of Korean society.

The decree stopped just short of martial law. Significantly, Park hasn't exercised these powers. He doesn't need to. Everybody got the message.

"It was something like Mao Tse-Tung's 'Let a hundred flowers bloom' campaign," an American observer said dryly. "All the dissidents raised their heads and then Park zapped them."

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With students strolling in the parks instead of demonstrating in the streets, the great silencing of criticism is most noticeable in the monotony of the Korean press.

Some newspapermen have been picked up and roughed up, or held overnight at the police station. "After that we see the error of our ways," one of them said.

Press freedom has always been a sometime thing in Korea, but never has censorship been so tight as it is today.

The Korean Central Intelligence Agency is chillingly ubiquitous—in newspaper offices, the universities, *kesang* houses and all government agencies. CIA men camp outside the offices of university presidents, monitor U.S. Information Service programs for hidden motives and finance favored candidates in student elections.

"Nobody wants the job any more," said one student, "because it's tainted. If you get elected everybody assumes you're a CIA stooge."

Professors have been made responsible for the political behavior of their students, each being assigned 20 to 30 students. If a student becomes troublesome, the professor whose job is at stake doesn't hesitate to call on the offender's parents.

What has happened in South Korea has happened in other so-called developing countries, including South Vietnam. Introduced by the United States to combat Communist espionage and subversion, the intelligence agency has been turned against the people it was designed to protect.

"Let there be no mistake about it," said a Western official. "The Korean CIA is the political enforcement arm of the Park government. Its influence is all-pervasive."

By unanimous agreement, the second most powerful man in South Korea is the CIA's director, Lee Hurak, 48, a shadowy figure whose low visibility makes him seem, in the words of one acquaintance, "like the man who wasn't there."

He also is the most feared. His name, if mentioned at all, is accompanied by a nervous look over the shoulder. A hard-nosed anti-Communist whose loyalty to Park is unquestioned, Lee is an old hand at the intelligence game.

After serving as the first chief of the Korean CIA in the last days of the Rhee regime, Lee was jailed briefly when Park and his fellow military plotters seized power in 1961.

But Lee quickly adapted to the new order, became Park's chief press secretary, director of information and ambassador to Japan before settling into his present job in 1970.

Unlike some of his predecessors, Lee is never seen in public. He has never been seen inside the American Embassy.

As CIA chief, Lee commands a small army of about 5,000 men, including some of the best brains in South Korea. He also has at his disposal the Army Security Agency, the 50,000-man national police and countless paid and unpaid informers.

Lee's methods are far more sophisticated than those used by the Rhee regime, which employed brute force to silence its opponents. The chief arrow in his quiver is selective intimidation, which he uses with skill.

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When the CIA cracked down on Dong-a Ilbo, Seoul's leading, most independent daily, other newspapers automatically fell in line. By the same token, when Park threatened to draft 10,000 university students, it was necessary to draft only 200 or 300.

Ordinary law-abiding citizens have found the CIA taking a new interest in their past. One Korean who has traveled abroad five times was denied a passport because his uncle allegedly collaborated with the Communists 22 years ago. A newspaper reporter was denied a security clearance because his brother, then a teen-ager, was forced to work for the Communists in 1950.

How much longer this state of affairs will prevail depends on the glum-faced Park, by nature and training an authoritarian. Park has his defenders, even among the intellectuals. After roundly denouncing

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